



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT  
3170 EAST MAIN STREET  
CANON CITY, COLORADO 81212



FRONT RANGE RESOURCE ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING  
CANON CITY, CO  
September 7, 2005

**MINUTES**

**Group 1**

Virginia Patton  
Gene King  
Charles Rech  
Jim Coleman  
Rick Thompson

**Group 2**

Lucy Bambrey  
Donna Murphy  
Josh Osterhoudt  
Larry Strohl

**Group 3**

Loren Whittemore  
Jim Bensberg  
Michael Bush

RAC Members not in attendance: Joseph Duda

**GUESTS:** Ross Manley, Senator Allard's Pueblo Office; BJ Jones, Senator Allard's Colorado Springs Office ; Allison Cortner, Senator Salazar's Office; SeEtta Moss, Arkansas Valley Audubon Society; Joe Kendall; Mike Bandero, Royal Gorge Bridge; Ivan Widom, Fremont Center for the Arts.

**BLM/FS PERSONNEL:** Roy Masinton, Ken Smith, Bob Leverton, Mark Swinney, Jan Lownes, Pete Zwaneveld, Marilyn Schuyler.

**COUNCIL BUSINESS:** Roy Masinton said appointments have not been made yet for the 5 RAC Members whose appointments have expired. These appointments are on the Secretary's desk for signature.

Ken briefed the Members on the new RAC Handbooks. The information for the state and local section will be available at the November meeting, after the new members have been appointed.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS:** SeEtta Moss, Arkansas Valley Audubon Society said she will be going to Washington DC in 2 weeks as part of a Westwide coalition of recreation and conservation interests. She will encourage Congress to ask Secretary Norton to get other BLM offices to do Travel Management and Recreation Planning the way the Royal Gorge Field Office does their planning.

Joe Kendall commented about the "Over the River" Project. He stated there is one main thing of concern and that is the EPA and the number of cars that will be coming through Salida and causing pollution. He feels this is a health problem for people in the area.

### **MANAGERS UPDATE:**

**Bob Leverton, Forest Supervisor, Pike and San Isabel National Forests, Commanche and Cimaron National Grasslands:** The main priority this year and probably the next 2 years is a plan revision on the Pike/San Isabel National Forest and the Grasslands. He encouraged the RAC to become involved in the revision process. They are in the process of putting together a draft plan for the Grasslands and hope to have that done by the end of September or first of October. It will be out for review and comments around that time.

The Pike National Forest is involved in the Front Range Fuels Treatment Partnership, which is a partnership to research fuels treatment in and around wildland interface along the Front Range. A year ago they developed a Front Range Roundtable that includes all interests on the Front Range. They are now in the process of establishing, based on science, the projects that need to be done and the economics of how to get it done including community outreach strategies.

Currently fire season is dwindling, but the Forest is sending a lot of people to the Southeast to help with relief efforts in Mississippi and Louisiana. The Arapahoe Roosevelt National Forests and the Pike and San Isabel Forests are involved in the Urban Front Country Initiative. That will deal with Front Range problems along the Ramphart Range. It is similar to Travel Management.

**Mark Swinney; San Luis Valley:** Our new Law Enforcement Officer is on board, he comes from the National Park Service back east. BLM has also been requested to identify staff that is willing to help with Hurricane Relief.

The San Luis Valley will begin a Resource Management Plan in 2006. This Plan will include what they were planning to include in their McIntyre/Simpson Grazing Plan only it will include more than just grazing. They are requesting funding assistance, however the Plan will begin either way.

They are in the process of finishing the Travel Management Plan and are hoping to have public meetings on the Environmental Assessment between Thanksgiving and Christmas. They are expecting 3 public meeting and a 30 day comment period. This is not required by NEPA but it is the right thing to do.

There is a proposal for a Four Wheel Drive Area in the Lime Kiln area, west and a little south of Monte Vista. They had hoped to complete the Environmental Assessment this summer. They are getting a lot of input and are hoping to do the Assessment and evaluate it soon.

**Roy Masinton, Royal Gorge Field Manager:** As a result of a lawsuit, the final Grazing Rule that was discussed at the last RAC meeting, has been pulled back to the Washington Office. They are redoing a portion of the Environmental Assessment to include some additional evaluations.

There is concern about the budget for FY 06, hopefully it will remain flat but it may be affected by the Hurricane relief efforts.

Over the Fire Season the Canon City fire staff responded to 36 incidents for a total of around 12,550 acres. This involves a variety of fires on various land ownerships. Our Single Engine Airtanker Base at the Fremont County Airport had 205 operations that were conducted in support of 11 wildland fire suppression incidents.

BLM manages a small piece of public land called Guffey Gorge outside of Guffey, for years it has been used mostly by families. Recently has turned into a teenager night spot. To help resolve some of the problems there, a Federal Register Notice will soon come out that will make the area “day use only” and will prohibit glass containers and target shooting. This may be somewhat controversial and difficult to enforce.

Pete Zwaneveld mentioned the Park County Commissioners are encouraging an idea to establish a National Heritage Area – the general location is the northern part of South Park. They are focusing on the ranching history, the mining history and the natural values that are there. They are getting a proposal together and have asked BLM to send a letter of support.

**SAN LUIS VALLEY LAND EXCHANGE UPDATE, (Mark Swinney):** The San Luis Valley is currently working on the appraisal section of the Baca Land Exchange. Until the appraisal is done they will not know how that will impact the Valley. It is hoped that Site 1 and 2 end up with a high appraisal because that would mean BLM would loose less lands in order to match the total value of the State land within the Park and Refuge. The difference in the value between Site 1 and 2 and the value of those State Park and Refuge lands will have to be made up out of Site 3 and 4. Once the appraisal work is done then they will have an idea of how much of these lands the BLM and Valley are going to loose.

There was a proposal from a landowner north and west of Monte Vista, that he had some water rights in the Anderson ditch and some adjacent BLM lands and he was interested in some kind of a swap. This is the Anderson Ditch land exchange, it was started and then stopped. We are going to see where BLM boundaries actually are, where his boundaries are, what kind of restrictions are involved with his water rights and if those water rights can be transferred to the Blanca Wetlands. BLM is looking at trading 290 acres, north of Highway 160 between Monte Vista and Del Norte for the water rights and a smaller portion of land that he owns.

**ROYAL GORGE FIELD OFFICE LAND EXCHANGE UPDATE, (Jan Lownes):**

*Black Hawk-Dilely Land Exchange:* the city of Black Hawk will acquire 497 acres of public land within the city’s growth area. These lands consist of 67 small parcels and the remnants of a mining district. We would be acquiring the Dilley Ranch, it is 1600 acres and is located north of Canon City. It contains numerous historic fossil recovery sites. This land exchange should be finished about the Fall of 2006.

*Sipal Land Exchange*; which is nearing completion. In this exchange the acquisition and disposal properties are in the same general area. BLM will exchange about 4,000 acres of public land for about 1,400 acres, all in Park County.

*Cooper Mountain Land Exchange*; this exchange involves about 2,200 acres of private land for 2,000 acres of Federal land. The land to be acquired includes valuable Mexican Spotted Owl and Peregrine Falcon Habitat and would protect riparian habitat.. BLM is currently working on the Environmental Assessment and hopes that will be completed this winter.

*Hallenbeck Land Exchange*; the BLM will acquire 120 acres in Lake County and dispose of 50 acres of land in Boulder County.

*Boulder Land Exchange*; This exchange is in the early stages and is going to be a lot larger and a lot more complicated than the last one involving Boulder County. The parties to this exchange are going to be Boulder County, the U.S. Forest Service and Shepard and Associates. BLM is preparing a feasibility study and it should go to the Washington Office for review later this fall or early winter. BLM will acquire 2,300 acres of private land in Fremont County in the Current Creek Area and the 31 Mile Mountain Area, and dispose of 1,700 acres in the Green Mountain Area. And in the Boulder County area, we will dispose of all the lands that have not been identified for acquisition by the County under the Recreation and Public Purposes Act. The Forest Service will acquire about 1,200 acres of patented mining claims to consolidate their lands.

*Smith Creek-Kremmling Land Exchange*; is being handled out of the Kremmling Field Office and should close later this month. We will acquire one parcel in Fremont County and one parcel in Park County for 559 acres. BLM will dispose of one parcel each in Fremont, Custer and Park Counties totaling 360 acres. These parcels are included in this land exchange to equalize values.

*Hayden Ranch-West Parcel Land Acquisition*; This process involved the Lake County Open Space Council, with BLM acquiring 1,400 acres of the Hayden Ranch south of Leadville from the City of Aurora using Land and Water Conservation Fund money. The Conservation Fund was instrumental in the acquisition. It is expected this will close on September 21.

**UPDATE ON SOUTH PARK; (Pete Zwaneveld):** The alternatives, discussed at the July RAC meeting, included which lands to retain, which lands proposed to retain and lands proposed for disposal. The Environmental Assessment will soon be given to the Field Office staff for review with another public meeting this fall for public review.

**LUNCH**

**UPDATE ON “OVER THE RIVER” PROJECT; (Pete Zwaneveld):** Artists, Christo and Jean-Claude first approached the BLM in 1996 with a proposal to drape a portion of the Arkansas River. Some discussions were held and some background work begun, however the proposal was put on hold while Christo and Jean-Claude focused their attention on “The Gates” in New York’s Central Park. In August of this year, they met with BLM and State Parks representatives and asked to restart the process.

The project is called “Over the River” and the Artists would like to put this up for 2 weeks (14 days), during the first half of August. It is estimated that up to 250,000 people could view the project during that time. If the proposal is approved and everything goes well, it could happen the summer of 2008, but 2009 or 2010 is more realistic. The proposal includes draping about 6.5 miles of fabric over about a 45 mile stretch of the Arkansas River upstream from Parkdale. They want to string cables across the river, anchor them in a number of different ways and then hang about 926 individual panels of fabric, from the cables about 10 to 24 feet above the water. Christo and Jean-Claude plan to meet with Union Pacific Railroad to see if they could use the rails for access for construction purposes.

Impacts to wildlife during installation of the anchors and cables is one concern. Other concerns are the safety of people traveling the Highway and using the River for fishing, boating and viewing the project. Also the response time of police, fire and ambulance due to heavy traffic could be an issue. They would have monitors through the whole project to keep people from getting injured and to keep an eye on the fabric. Monitors would be located on both sides of the river.

In order for the project to occur, several things would need to happen. Colorado Department of Transportation requires a Traffic Management Plan and State Patrol requires an Event Management Plan. Both have hired a contractor to prepare these plans. A contractor will also prepare an Environmental Assessment (EA) for BLM review and decision. Parts of both the Traffic Management Plan and the Event Management Plan are needed for completion of the EA, and will determine details of the mitigation for many of the issues in the EA. A permit would then need to be issued jointly by the Colorado Department of Transportation and State Patrol and a separate permit by Fremont County, followed by a permit from Colorado State Parks. Oversight of the project is through a Permit Planning Team, consisting of 15 federal, state and local agencies. Christo and Jean-Claude will pay for all costs for the project. If approved, BLM would require a substantial Bond. Public meetings are tentatively planned for early December to let the public know what is being proposed and help identify any issues that have not been raised yet.

**SOUTH PARK SUB-COMMITTEE:** Kaaren Hardy was on the South Park Plan Sub-Committee, since she did not re-apply to be on the Council, Loren appointed Lucy Bambrey to fill in her position.

**ARKANSAS RIVER TRAVEL MANAGEMENT PLAN, (Pete Zwaneveld):** So far BLM has received about a dozen comments from the public meetings that were held in August. About 40 people attended the meeting in Salida and 30 at the meeting in Canon City. The public was asked to submit comments on the Travel Management Plan goals and objectives by September 30<sup>th</sup>, so not all comments have been received yet. Most of the comments so far dealt with Texas Creek, Big Hole and Salida Subunits, these are the most heavily used areas. Next we will develop our EA to come up with alternatives and develop a proposed action. A strategy meeting has been scheduled for the 12<sup>th</sup> of September to identify times when they will be available to focus on this task. There will be 3 alternatives for the EA. For the RAC meeting in November BLM may be able to present preliminary views of what the alternatives are going to look like.

**Browns Canyon Wilderness Proposal (Loren Whittemore):** For several years, Congressman Hefley has been looking at protecting Browns Canyon Wilderness Study Area and making it into a Wilderness Area. At the Congressman's request, the BLM and U.S. Forest Service met with some of the groups involved and worked out a potential boundary of about 20,000 acres. On August 29, the Congressman held a public meeting in Salida, that was a positive meeting. There is only one trail involved and it is closed at the boundary. The potential boundary would be 200 ft from the Arkansas River. The Bill will probably be drafted in the next few weeks, after the comment period ends on September 30, and it may go to Congress before the end of this session.

The Council passed a Resolution in support of Wilderness designation.

The meeting was adjourned at 3 p.m.

Roy L. Masinton  
Royal Gorge Field Manager  
Bureau of Land Management

Loren R. Whittemore  
Chairman  
Front Range Resource Advisory Council